

September 5, 2002

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chairman, and Members, Commission on Higher Education

**From:** Ms. Dianne Chinnes, Chairman, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of Centers of Excellence Competitive Grants Proposals, FY 2002-03**

**Background**

Requests for Proposals for Centers of Excellence for the 2002-03 project year were issued to all eligible public and private institutions in October 2001. Four proposals were received for consideration:

- ❖ Columbia College: Center of Excellence for Curriculum Integration
- ❖ Benedict College: Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African American Students
- ❖ College of Charleston: Center of Excellence for the Study of Teacher Leadership and Collective Decision-Making in Schools
- ❖ Clemson University: Center of Excellence in Early Literacy

A Review Panel consisting of one out-of-state consultant, the Associate Provost at Coastal Carolina University, a representative from Richland School District One, a Teacher-in-Residence from the S.C. Center for Teacher Recruitment, a representative from the School of Education at Presbyterian College, and staff from the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education, was appointed to review the proposals and to make recommendations. In addition, a representative from Bell South assisted the panel by reading the highest rated proposal and providing feedback to the Panel. The Panel was chaired by Dr. Robert Shoenberg, a national education consultant from Maryland.

## **Discussion**

The Review Panel met on May 9, 2002, to conduct one-hour interviews with representatives from each institution and discuss the merits of each proposed center. The Panel's recommendation is to decline the proposed centers from Columbia College, the College of Charleston, and Clemson University. The Panel members conducted a lengthy discussion about the proposals and concluded that the proposed center from Benedict College rated the highest in the panel's discussion but that there were additional matters that needed to be fully addressed. The Panel compiled a list of questions which were subsequently forwarded to Benedict and were later reviewed by the Panel which affirmed its selection recommendation in light of acceptable answers provided to the questions of the Review Panel. The Panel members indicated that the proposed Center from Benedict College should be funded because of its immediate importance in addressing a critical education need in the State.

The Review Panel recommends, by unanimous decision, that the proposed Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African American Students at Benedict College be awarded funding for FY 2002-03. The Panel's final report indicates that the choice was strongly influenced by the high priority of the Center's focus for the state and the nation. The Center will have a statewide focus that has the potential to affect both teacher education programs as well as currently practicing teachers. The need to close the achievement gap is a very high priority for the state, and the proposed Center will focus its activities to address this issue. The project director noted the complexity of the issue and pointed out that the Center will focus on one component that can be addressed: the role of the teacher. The Center will work closely with teacher education faculty and public school educators to develop, evaluate, and apply effective strategies for educating African American students.

The recommended amount of the award to Benedict College is \$129,175 for the first year with a total four-year award of \$418,413.

## **Recommendation**

The Committee recommends that the Commission accept the Review Panel's recommendation and approve an award of \$129,175 for the first year with a total four-year award of \$418,413 to Benedict College to establish the Center of Excellence for the Education and Equity of African American Students.

(Note: Copies of the Center Proposal Abstracts and Center of Excellence Review Panel Report are available upon request.)